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ABSTRACT

Expressing the concern of the Parliamentary Libraries Section of International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) about the need of legislators for access to up-to-date, reliable, adequate libraries and dissemination facilities, this paper offers a general review of requirements necessary for the initiation and development of legislative libraries by developing nations, including operating principles, funding standards, service objectives, personnel and management matters, collection development, cooperative networking arrangements, and library equipment and facilities. A bibliography lists 21 references. (RAA)

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"LEGISLATIVE LIBRARIES AND RESEARCH SERVICES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES"

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Paper for the Parliamentary Libraries Section 46th General Conference of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, Manila, Philippines, 18-23 August, 1980.

Writer's Background:

The author is Head of the Department of the Parliamentary Library, Parliament House, Canberra, Australia. During the 1963-65 period, he was Australian Adviser on the Faculty of the United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime, located in Tokyo, Japan. He has travelled extensively in Asia and the Far East and has been on assignments in the Pacific Islands and Africa. He was first appointed to the Legislative Research Service of the Australian Commonwealth Parliamentary Library at the beginning of 1968. In addition to first-hand knowledge of conditions in a number of developing countries, Mr. Weir has made a study tour of major libraries and research centres in North America, Northern Europe, Scandinavia and Great Britain. He is Secretary of the Section of Parliamentary Libraries of IFLA.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.0 The Philippine Islands are strategically distanced from some of the world's most heavily populated regions, at the cross-roads of the major travel routes of Asia and the Far East. Manila is over 400 years old, presenting a blend of eastern and western cultures, and it is appropriate that the representatives of the world's library associations and similar institutions should there focus their attention on the library and information needs of developing countries.

1.2 Definitions

1.2.1 It can be safely assumed that the word "library" is generally understood, but the word "information" and the term "developing countries" call for clarification. and the particular interest of this Section in "parliaments" or "legislatures" calls for explanation of those words.

1.2.2 The word "information" is sometimes confused with "propaganda" when used in a political environment. That propaganda function is outside the scope of this paper. Here, the term "information" means something read or heard from books, newspapers, serials, electronic or other media or through conversations or more formal vocal and/or visual presentations. It includes learning, data, intelligence, news, ideas and advice concerning a particular fact or facts, circumstances, subjects, events, and also opinions and beliefs. The object of storing, classifying and communicating (transmitting) such information is to advise, instruct, advance knowledge or entertain the receiver.

1.2.3 The expression "developing country" is often vague in its application. It is frequently used to denote deprivation in social, economic and welfare conditions by comparison with standards in other countries classified as "developed". Such "developing" countries (sometimes called "The Third World") make up nearly three quarters of earth's inhabitants. Less than half of those countries (about 30) have what could be described as "democratic" or even "partly democratic" forms of government.

1.2.4 One common factor which "developing countries" have is "need". Although not necessarily the same as "poverty", "need" can mean just that. "Need" can be a shortage of adequate standards of living, medical care, employment, housing, and basic skills such as reading and writing. It can also be a lack of access to information available elsewhere and that deprivation results in retarded economic and social development, insecurity and injustice.

1.2.5 An American scholar, Lucian W. Pye, writing about the relationship of political culture to nation building in Burma, used the term "transitional countries" as an alternative, and possibly more appropriate, description of developing countries.[1]

1.2.6 "Parliaments" or "legislatures" in societies in transition from traditional, sometimes colonial, types of government to other forms in which the legislators may have had only limited, if any, legislative experience have special information needs. Changes are often rapid with complex economic, social and political factors exerting pressures from without and within the country. Many of the issues lack clear enunciation; concepts of nationhood may become subordinate to former indigenous and regional loyalties. Exceptional stresses and strains are placed on legislatures in such conditions and, if the challenges are to be met adequately, then appropriate library and information services must be available to the individual legislators.

1.2.7 The adjective "legislative", here used to denote a special type of library or information service, is treated as inter-changeable with the word "parliamentary".

1.2.8 In the English language, the word "parliament" has its roots in the old French word "parlement", suggesting a body of people who confer or speak with one another on matters of national concern. The word "legislature" is more directly related to the Latin words "lex" (law) and "latio", (proposing),

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1. "Politics, Personality, and Nation Building: Burma's Search for Identity". Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1961.

suggesting a body of persons with the power to propose or make laws.

1.2.9 Although the descriptive terms "legislative" and "parliamentary" are not strictly synonymous, no distinction is drawn between them when applied to types of libraries, but it is worth noting that traditional use of the word "parliament" suggests consensus decision-making, whereas the word "legislative" can be applied to all forms of government, including the oligarchies of some "transitional" countries.

1.3 Libraries and Information Services

1.3.1 The first fully developed systems of word writing probably appeared only about 5,000 years ago, but human beings have had a system of communication of information by means of visual symbols or signs almost from their earliest known existence. In Australia, where Aborigines have lived for at least 40,000 years and probably much longer, there are thousands of cave and rock art-sites throughout the continent. Some of these are quite ancient and record hunting achievements, historical events and the "dream-time" legends of the Australian aboriginal peoples.

1.3.2 Through libraries, attempts are made to collect and transmit human records of experiences, events, laws, plans, organisations, ideas, hopes, fears and inspiration. Countries which do not or cannot provide libraries accessible to people who can make use of them are in a very real sense deprived and, hopefully, transitional. Such countries are in need, no matter what their gross national product might be or how much potential wealth they might control. Without access to reliable up-to-date information services their legislators are unable to keep up with the times or to make the best use of available knowledge.

2. PARLIAMENTARY (LEGISLATIVE) LIBRARIES - CONTROL

2.1.0 The 46th IFLA Conference is concerned about that need for access to libraries, but the Parliamentary Libraries Section

in particular is concerned about the need of legislatures for access to up-to-date, reliable, adequate libraries and information dissemination facilities.

2.1.1 In Australia, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library is a Department which services the information needs of the national legislature consisting of a Senate and a House of Representatives. The Parliamentary Librarian is the Permanent Head, with the same responsibilities as the Heads of all Government Departments, but he is answerable to the Presiding Officers of the Parliament and not directly to the Executive Government of the day. The Parliamentary Library stands independent of the information resources available to the Departments of Government, and provides library and legislative research services for Senators and Members, who are eligible to use them by reason of their election to the Parliament. Such a distinction between government services and parliamentary services cannot be drawn in all countries.

2.1.2 There are parliamentary libraries which are controlled by the National Library of their country; there are others which are answerable to a Government Minister and, through him, to the Executive. In systems of government (law-making) which do not distinguish between the Executive and a Parliament, this does not present a problem. However, in a country where an elected Parliament claims supremacy, its members are more likely to have objective and unrestricted access to the information needed in their deliberations if they control their own library and legislative research services.

2.1.3 Such parliamentary-controlled services enable legislators to evaluate and inform themselves not only on a government's policies, programs and practices but also on possible alternatives.

2.1.4 There is a danger in such control which should be noted; that is the problem inherent in political patronage in the employment of staff. High quality professional standards with objectivity and impartiality in the provision of legislative

information services are difficult to maintain if the clients of the services also influence terms and conditions of employment. The solution to this problem is to have legislative control of the policy and programs of its information services, but to provide for staff employment and working conditions which are independent of political control. (See para. 5.4.3).

2.1.5 There are various methods of control of a parliamentary library's resources and staff. Political philosophies, historical antecedents, attitudes to the availability of information, economic capacity and other factors combine to bring about what is feasible in a given situation. The important point is that the law-making authority should have unrestricted access to all the information without which it cannot reach the best decisions for its own people and their relationships to the rest of the world.

3. FUNDING

3.1.0 At the best of times, it is hard to estimate minimum standards for the funding of legislative information services. It is far more difficult to do so when costs are rising steeply and demands for other services relevant to the welfare and even survival of many people are strong. In the long run, the decision as to the allocation of resources for legislative information services will depend on the degree of importance given to those services.

3.1.1 If the relevant decision-makers believe that no man is sufficient alone for all the wisdom needed to cope with the problems of modern times, they will try to avail themselves of the best information on the experience, research and opinions of others, then determine the relevance of that information to the circumstances applying to their own country.

3.1.2 The latter point deserves emphasis. It is unwise to ignore the available information; likewise it is foolish to assume that what works well in one set of circumstances inevitably will work well elsewhere. Pathetic attempts at the

unmodified transfer of disciplines and practices from one culture to another have been unsuccessful and have sometimes retarded the development of indigenous capacities which are more relevant to local circumstances and could do the work better.

3.1.3 Adequate funds are essential, with the inevitable application of priorities and sacrifices or delays in alternative commitments. Funds must not only cover the costs of access to information, its suitable storage and retrieval, but also the costs of researching it, analysing, synthesising, adapting and considering its applicability to local needs. In other words, the funding of legislative information services in these times of enormous amounts of information, requires both library and what has come to be known as "legislative research" services.

3.1.4 Legislative libraries have a clearly defined role to play; they are special libraries and as such do not normally have the range of functions of a national library, nor the distinctive responsibilities of academic and other libraries. The special nature of legislative libraries and research services, particularly in developing countries, requires them to justify their claim to special consideration in the allocation of scarce financial resources. This means that they should be even more accountable than most libraries, with emphasis on efficiency of operations, restraints on unnecessary spending not necessarily related to the purpose for which they exist, and an awareness at all times of the desirability of a cost/benefit and cost/effectiveness approach to their operations.

3.1.5 What Professor Pauline Atherton of the School of Information Studies, Syracuse University, USA, says about financing a national system of information services applies also to parliamentary libraries:

> "One of the decisive facts is the limited financial resources of developing countries and the consequent emphasis on economy in the establishment of their system of information services. The need for technical assistance from international organizations and the industrialized countries needs to be emphasized. This assistance can successfully bring the information

services of a country to life, and may also help in the designing of information systems and the acquisition of expensive equipment. The actual operation of the national system of information services, however, should be solely in the hands of the country and should be covered by the country's own financial means".2

4. OBJECTIVES

4.1.0 The following summary of possible objectives of a legislative library and research service is provided as a check list of activities;

i) to provide the legislature including its committees with the best available information on which to base its decision-making,

ii) to provide impartial, reliable and up-to-date written and/or oral briefs to assist legislators in the course of their official duties,

iii) to provide legislators with digests, summaries and similar shorthand forms of information which enable them to cope with complex issues and ever-increasing amounts of data,

iv) to assist legislators in their duties through seminars, conferences and programs designed to ensure that they are informed, e.g. on the application of computer technology or alternative sources of energy,

v) to provide immediate access to local, regional and international newspapers, radio programs, television programs (where available), films, video-tapes, teleprinters and other modern communication media,

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2. ATHERTON, Pauline "Handbook for Information Systems and Services", UNESCO, Paris, 1977, p.31.

vi) to assist in the understanding of proposed legislation through translation of legal terms into those understood by legislators without legal training,

vii) to provide ready access to data on national and international current affairs, history and geography,

viii) to provide access to all official publications including those of the United Nations,

ix) to provide ready reference services,

x) to ensure that an appropriate quiet area is set aside for the exclusive use of legislators for reading and study,

xi) to assist in the preparation of briefs for legislators proceeding overseas on study visits or for participation in international meetings,

xii) to provide in-depth studies of issues of concern to the legislature and relevant facts on issues of immediate legal relevance,

xiii) to provide facilities for evaluating the cost and estimating the likely effect of proposed legislation as well as the means for analysis and comparing alternative policies and programs,

xiv) in countries where more than one language is recognised by the legislature to provide for translation, interpretation and assistance so that all proceedings of the legislature in official languages can be comprehended by all its members,

xv) to provide reading lists on topics of current interest to assist in the understanding of particular issues and to advance the knowledge of the legislator.

4.1.1 Various models may be supported by different groups with considerable changes in emphasis but it is proposed that minimum standards of organisation for a legislative library and research service call for:

(a) library facilities providing access to print and non-print materials including inter-library loans (above items i, v, vii & viii);

(b) a library reference service which can assist in the provision of data of a general reference kind in quick response to the needs of legislators (item ix);

(c) access to subject specialists who can analyse information, evaluate sources, provide comparisons and suggest alternatives (items ii, xii & xiii).

4.1.2 The latter is the type of service commonly described as a "legislative research service" although it is not real research in the sense that the term is used and understood in academic organisations. This service may be provided through written papers or personal consultations.

4.1.3 In some countries, e.g. U.S.A., Switzerland and Sweden, the research service is clearly distinguished from the library and reference services by administrative arrangements. Such distinction would be a luxury for a transitional country where cost/benefit may justify only a single organisation in which library and research services are combined.

5. STAFF

5.1 General Comments

5.1.0 Notwithstanding advances in automation the most important assets in legislative information services are the people who make up the staff. Such services are unique not only in their objectives and in the limited clientele that they serve but also in the special requirements of the officers who work in them.

5.1.1 Philip Laundy, Director of the Research Branch of the Canadian Parliamentary Library, speaking of the way in which officers of parliamentary libraries serve their clients, says:

> "The selection of information must aim at completeness coupled with conciseness. Exhaustiveness in the provision of all the available material on an issue is therefore not the goal, but rather the selection of what is essential and most useful in the context of the request. Members are sufficiently inundated with paper from other sources without the parliamentary library adding needlessly to the deluge".3

5.1.2 It is not always understood by professional officers with experience in other types of libraries that there is a difference between staff duties in parliamentary libraries and duties elsewhere.

5.1.3 Dr. David Menhennet, the Librarian of the House of Commons, Westminster, emphasises this distinction in an Appendix on "The House of Commons Library" which appears in a book of essays by members of a Study of Parliament Group.[4] The quote is from Thomas Vardon, the then Librarian, who, in 1835 when asked to distinguish between the duties of a 'parliamentary' and a 'public' librarian is reported to have said:

> "The distinction is very strong in practice when properly worked out. My duties, as attending the parliamentary department of the Library, I consider to embrace the attendance on Members generally, or select committees specially, and upon the House during the progress of public business. The attendance on Members generally is rather indefinite, but it amounts in fact to this, that to the extent of time which I can give, which is day and night during the sitting of the House, the practice is, that there is no subject connected with parliamentary business, on finance, or the forms of the House, or the progress of Bills, or the contents of Acts, on which I am not called upon to afford instant information".

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3. LAUNDY, Philip "Parliamentary Libraries and the provision of research service to Members of Parliament", Thesis submitted for Fellowship of the Library Association, 1976, p.13.
4. WALKLAND, S.A. (Ed.) "The House of Commons in the Twentieth Century", Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1979, p.616.

5.1.4 Staff must be sensitive to politics and aware of the realities of government in their own country. Employment in the service of a legislature brings with it a requirement for self-discipline and professional ethics beyond the standards which operate in other organisations.

5.2 Ethics

5.2.1 Servants of the legislature, like public servants everywhere, are required to be diligent in their duty, careful in the use and preservation of official property, courteous to clients, prompt in attending to reasonable requirements and obedient to all enactments, regulations and authoritative instructions. They may not directly or indirectly give information concerning matters of which they have knowledge officially nor disclose the contents of official papers or names of clients without authority.

5.2.2 Parliamentary officers should not seek the influence or interest of any client in order to obtain promotion, transfer or other advantage. They should not directly or indirectly accept gifts or presents in relation to any matter connected with their official duties and they should refrain from identification with political activities or any conversation or conduct which could give rise to the belief that they take a particular position in relation to the legislators whom they serve. In particular, they may not use their position for lobbying on behalf of any cause or take steps to promote certain information to the detriment of opposing views.

5.2.3 Particular care should be taken by subject specialists required to provide oral or written briefs for legislators. Even when requested to do so they should not express personal views or make recommendations remembering that it is their duty to provide facts objectively, honestly and analytically.

5.2.4 Subject specialists must be sensitive to their own shortcomings and those of the data they read and process, guarding against their own ready acceptance of the conventional wisdom.

5.2.5 In an age when emphasis is placed on the right of access to information it may be thought that officers who work in legislative libraries should seek information of a restricted or classified category. There are problems in such activities which should arguably be left to others whose business is to deal with such matters.

5.2.6 In some countries there is a tradition of anonymity on behalf of both public and parliamentary servants. In others and in more recent times this practice of anonymity is relaxed and authors are permitted to sign papers or to be identifiable by clients so that further direct contacts may be made. To a large extent local conditions determine policy on this matter.

5.3 Qualifications

5.3.1 In developing countries, it is often easier to lay down minimum standards for staff qualifications than it is to provide persons with such qualifications, or to find the funds with which to pay the salaries commensurate with those qualifications.

5.3.2 Ideally, legislative library and reference services should be provided by professionally trained librarians, assisted by qualified support staff and technicians.

5.3.3 Legislative research specialists are not necessarily librarians. They can be expensive. It is advisable for them to have practical experience as well as formal qualifications. A statistician on a permanent basis is desirable, as most matters calling for determination or judgment have a statistical component relating to cost, population, international rates of exchange, electoral data and suchlike. Other specialists who may be employed or seconded with value, depending on the nature of the legislature, would include technical consultants, economists, lawyers, scientists, engineers, defence officers and specialists in education, and foreign and home affairs.

5.3.4 There are few developed countries which can provide subject specialists in all the fields to which modern Parliaments are required to direct their attention. It has been found necessary in some cases to provide a small group of experienced and qualified subject specialists on a full-time basis, supported by special subject consultants who may be on call when needed, or available during the periods when Parliament is in session. Another method of providing subject specialist/consultants is by secondment of such officials from executive departments or by arrangements for the provision of experts through international aid programs.

5.4 Staff management, selection and organisation

5.4.1 Professor Abdo I. Baaklini, the Associate Director of the Comparative Development Studies Center at the State University of New York at Albany, USA, has discussed the attempt to provide legislatures in Brazil, Costa Rica and Lebanon with a professional staff that would be able to help at important transitional times.[5] Baaklini says:

> "A salient feature of these reforms is the provision of a professional legislative staff to help the institution in its work. In the case of the Brazilian Senate, over forty professional staff members were added to the Advisory Department, while in the Brazilian House of Deputies a similar number of professional staff was added to the Legislative Department. In Costa Rica, a new department, the Technical Department, was established, headed by a director who worked directly with the president of the legislature and chairmen of committees under the administrative supervision of the director general of the legislative staff. Eight professional staff members have been recruited to this department. In Lebanon, a bill was introduced and approved providing for a study and research center at the directorate level working with the president and the leadership committee of the Chamber".6

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5. HEAPHEY, James, J., and BALUTIS, Alan P., (Eds.) "Legislative Staffing - A Comparative Perspective", Halsted Press Division, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1975.
6. ibid., p.224.

5.4.2 In each of the cases mentioned there was a need on the part of legislators for information to assist in choosing between alternative courses of action. In the selection of staff each of the three countries emphasised that recommendations had to be "non-political, non-partisan and unbiased".

5.4.3 The way in which legislative staff is organised in Brazil, Costa Rica and Lebanon is described by Baaklini;

> "The staff reports directly to the president or to an administrative tenured officer under him, and, therefore, is protected from the political control of various legislative leaders, representatives of minority parties, parties in the opposition, or even chairmen of committees. To ensure the political independence of the staff, elaborate procedures embodied in writing the internal rules of each legislature were devised.... Research associated with private, member-sponsored bills or with constituency-related issues is considered private or personal in nature and, therefore, discouraged. The use of the staff to aid a legislator in identifying problems relevant to his political success is not considered legitimate. The needs of the legislator for a staff to identify and alert him to negative situations he should avoid or to positive opportunities that he should capitalize upon are discouraged as being corrupt and partisan. Thus, to ensure their political neutrality, legislative staff units were limited in areas that could strengthen the legislator, and strengthened in areas that could contribute to the institution, such as the collection, control, and dissemination of information that will constitute the basis of decision-making".7

5.5 Information Scientists

5.5.1 Dr. Eugene Garfield, the founder and president of the Institute for Scientific Information, the inventor of such works as the "Science Citation Index" and "Current Contents", has been a notable exponent of the belief that information science should become a profession in its own right. There are many disciplines which now contribute to information storage, retrieval and delivery. The realisation of this fact led to the development of the Institute of Information Scientists (62 London Road, Reading,

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7. ibid., pp.227-228.

RGI 5 AS, England). The IIS sets universally recognised standards for qualifications of information scientists and provides an international link between different professional groups. The desirability of such an eclectic body in the provision of information and research services for legislatures will probably become apparent soon. There has been some consideration of an international association of legislative research specialists but the sort of organisation and objectives of the Institute of Information Scientists would meet the needs which prompted those tentative and, so far, fruitless considerations.

5.6 "Advisers"

5.6.1 Care must be taken in the employment of naticnals from other countries in a legislative library and research service. The commitment of staff to national interests must be paramount; foreigners may be useful in planning or developing the services and there is a place for "experts" of this kind, but no room should be left for the exercise of external influence in such an important national undertaking.

5.7 Languages and Dialects

5.7.1 The problem of providing library and research services in more than one language and/or dialect confronts many "transitional" countries. Various ways are being tried to deal with this problem, e.g. the use of one commonly accepted language for debate, with printed summaries in all recognised languages; instantaneous translation services, and so on, but inevitably this multi-language situation has relevance to staff requirements as well as printed resources in legislative libraries.

5.7.2 A minimum standard for language requirements is that every legislator should be provided with at least one qualified professional officer in the library who can talk with him in his own tongue. This is particularly important for small ethnic minorities who have parliamentary representation.

5.7.3 The joint Russian-American space probe of some years ago intensified efforts to provide an automated translation service. Capacity to deal with routine commands and technical matters was achieved, and research is continuing in this area but, while some results have been of interest, no immediate spectacular breakthrough is expected in automated translation services appropriate to legislative libraries.

5.8 Minimum staff requirements

5.8.1 Overall, the minimum staff requirements of a legislative library and research service depend on local conditions, but they must include an appropriate number of properly trained and qualified librarians and some professional officers who have had actual experience in government administration. The number of subject specialists and the type and number of support staff and technicians will depend on circumstances. Regardless of their formal qualifications those with the most senior responsibilities must be managers of information systems whose financial, organisational and administrative decisions are determined by the information needs of those they serve.

6. THE LIBRARY COLLECTION

6.1 Rising Costs

6.1.0 The cost of printed material is rising at an alarming rate and this is aggravated by increasing costs of postage and delivery. Most library administrators are familiar with the difficulty of maintaining the rate of acquisition of new material at a level commensurate with the amount of such material being published. New methods of printing and producing are being studied but rising library costs are realities of contemporary life, which have particular relevance in developing countries.

6.1.1 One method of meeting costs is by greater use of interlibrary exchanges and network arrangements. Another is the more ready availability of microforms and the resultant savings in cost and time for their international delivery and reduced storage space.

6.1.2 Because of the long-standing habit of book reading and the aversion of some readers to microforms it is the opinion of some library administrators that print material will continue to provide the main core of library services for at least the rest of this century.

6.2 Basic Ingredients

6.2.1 Given the assumption that printed material will continue to be the most important source of library data in the foreseeable future certain basic books are essential. Encyclopaedias; dictionaries; national records and statistics; official publications including United Nations publications; national history collections; maps; local, national and major international newspapers and citation indexes of various kinds are basic ingredients on which many other additions can be made and about which there is certain to be debate.

6.2.2 Some provision should also be made for general reading in history, the classics and modern works, not forgetting fiction.

6.2.3 For the guidance of all concerned, including potential donors of material, it is desirable for the library's collection development policy to be clearly stated in writing.

6.3 "The Media"

6.3.1 The inescapable relationships between parliaments and mass communications make it imperative for legislative libraries to provide access to current information especially newspapers, radio, and where available, television.

6.3.2 Dr. Colin Seymour-Ure, Reader in Politics in the University of Kent at Canterbury, England, describes the relationship from an English viewpoint:

"There is a deeper sense in which Parliament accepts but resents the importance of mass communications. The shape of Parliament is necessarily conditioned to some extent by the communications technology of the day. The parliamentary idea of corsultation preceded Parliament as an institution. The growth of newspapers and of parliamentary responsibility to the electorate encouraged the institution continually to adapt its behaviour to the needs of the press, just as in the earliest days its timetable was geared to the cycle of seedtime and harvest. At the extreme one may argue that communications media are 'bigger' than institutions; so that if Parliament fails to adapt to a new medium like television - whose parliamentary coverage it has continually limited - Parliament not the new medium will in the long run be the loser".8

6.4 Serials

6.4.1 The amount of time taken to publish books now means that most new discoveries are reported in serials. The number of serials in each subject area is steadily growing as more and more scholars find it essential to "publish or perish". The Australian Commonwealth Parliamentary Library receives approximately 9,000 serial titles a year and this creates considerable accessions problems and adds to cataloguing and distribution tasks.

6.4.2 A good deal of what is written in such serials may be of merely passing interest and some of it bears evidence of unnecessary repetition and waste of money on research to confirm facts which have already been established. Nevertheless it is essential for even the most modest legislative library and research facility to provide access for its clients to a considerable number of serial titles if they are to be kept informed.

6.4.3 Publications such as "Current Contents" initiated by the Institute for Scientific Information, Philadelphia, USA, have been found indispensable in a great number of libraries.

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8. WALKLAND, S.A. (Ed.) "The House of Commons in the Twentieth Century", Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1979, p.530.

6.4.4 Because of the prestige which can be attached to the receipt of some journals in a legislative library attempts to cancel them can be regarded as politically motivated and give rise to misunderstandings.

6.5 Special Collections

6.5.1 In addition to its general collection each library should develop resources in at least one subject which becomes that library's speciality.

6.5.2 It is suggested that parliamentary libraries should give attention to publications which are relevant to the history, traditions and underlying principles and philosophy of the legislatures to which they belong.

7. SUPPORT RESOURCES

7.1.0 The size and exact nature of the collection will not only depend on needs and available resources, but also on the accessibility of other collections. The National Library of Australia grew out of the Parliamentary Library, achieving separate corporate existence in the 1960s. Its physical proximity and statutory requirement, as well as the willingness of its management, all combine to give an invaluable support to the Parliamentary Library and Research Service.

7.1.1 The availability of this type of support enables a parliamentary service to concentrate on building up a collection relevant to the needs of its particular clients.

7.1.2 Modern computer-based network arrangements usefully link library and information resources in those parts of the world where the technology is available. Within national boundaries a link between the legislative library and government departments has obvious benefits, e.g. such a scheme has been implemented in Bonn and Berlin.

7.1.3 A rationalisation of library collections with efficient inter-library exchange programs and even modern networks can be arranged in cities where there are a number of well-equipped libraries but it is not so easy in developing countries and particularly in isolated islands such as Nauru, Fiji, Noumea, Tonga, Western Samoa, Kiribati, and many similar countries.

7.2 Deposits and Gifts

7.2.1 There are parliamentary libraries which have inexpensive and ready access to some material as a result of the statutory obligation of publishers to provide them with deposit copies.

7.2.2 In some developing countries there is a considerable amount of publishing activity e.g. India, but not all developing countries are able to produce books speedily, economically and with internationally accepted standards.

7.2.3 There is room for more international books and serials exchanges and gifts between legislative libraries and a greater measure of responsibility on the part of those in affluent countries for the provision of material to legislative libraries in less advantaged countries.

7.2.4 IFLA is well aware of this and a tangible result which could emerge from the 1980 meetings of the IFLA Section of Parliamentary Libraries would be clearer guidelines for a program of exchange of publications between parliamentary, as distinct from national, libraries and more particularly for an increased commitment from the "advantaged" libraries. Perhaps the Inter-Parliamentary Union could assist in such a scheme.

7.2.5 This would go beyond the present very useful function performed by the International Centre for Parliamentary Documentation which the I.P.U. set up in 1965 and which promotes parliamentary research and acts as a repository of comparative parliamentary information.

7.2.6 For parliaments which have ties with it, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, based in London, established a Parliamentary Information and Reference Centre in 1971. Its activities include a fund for the provision of a basic collection of books to new legislatures.

8. EQUIPMENT

8.1.0 The decade of the 1970s has been one of changing information techniques; the rate of change may accelerate even more in the next few years.

8.1.1 Minimum standards in a legislative library include photocopiers, microfiche and microfilm readers and reader/printers, map storage facilities, radio receivers, television receivers (where television is provided), video-cassette players, slide and movie projectors and, where locally available, teleprinter (wire) receivers.

8.1.2 Access to material in microform is now essential as some information of a basic nature is only available in microform. Consequently the most basic parliamentary library equipment must include readers for fiche and film.

8.1.3 Electronic word processing equipment is gaining in popularity. Some of the claims for the processors' greater speed of output are dubious but as a text-editing facility for correcting legislative research service papers, library reading lists, indexes of current information and similar functions they have advantages over old manual typing methods. They cannot be supported as essential items of equipment in situations where basic minimum requirements only can be considered.

8.2 Computers

8.2.1 The attractions of replacing printed material with electronic storage and retrieval processes have been advanced by the recent accessibility of national and international satellite communications but such processes can involve considerable capital outlay and high running costs.

8.2.2 In many transitional countries where funds are scarce and labour is plentiful the very mention of computers could seem ludicrous. However, their use has become so common in libraries that they cannot be ignored although they are not considered essential within minimum standards at this time.

8.2.3 Computers are being used for both library housekeeping functions and information retrieval. The former functions include acquisitions, cataloguing, circulation and serials control. The latter include the production of indexes and searching files of documents.

8.2.4 Computers enable librarians to deal with many tasks more efficiently, more accurately, more comprehensively and, sometimes, less expensively. They provide a means for coping with increasing workloads arising from the "information explosion" and can make new and better services available for legislators.

8.2.5 Computers can cause previously unknown inconvenience to clients and staff through "down time". Some parliamentary librarians are not convinced that computer-based procedures are faster in the final analysis than traditional manual-based procedures. Tales are now being told of computer-based library systems which have never given satisfaction and which have been declared redundant within very short time periods.

8.2.6 Minicomputers or microprocessors are currently attracting special attention from some library administrators who favour their application to particular tasks such as control of circulation, ordering and accessioning of items and cataloguing.

8.2.7 The Machine-Readable Cataloguing system (MARC) emerged in the 1960s. New technology may make its magnetic tape method of communication redundant and on-line access to MARC tapes will still be beyond the resources of some legislative libraries but the idea and similar alternatives with their implications for cataloguing and use in systems of Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) cannot be overlooked.

8.2.8 With the development of equipment capable of optical character recognition it became possible to input data on microfilm to a computer system through what is known as a Computer Input Microfilm (CIM) unit. Computer-produced information can also be converted to microfilm and microfiche through a system known as Computer Output Microfilm (COM). The equipment for these processes is expensive and is not considered a basic need at this time.

8.3 Implementation

8.3.1 There is an inevitability about modern information science and technology, acceptance of which may be postponed but cannot be avoided. Costs, complexities, sizes of installations and distance difficulties are being reduced and speed of access and range of facilities available are being increased.

8.3.2 It is difficult to accept such inevitability in countries where labour is plentiful and even in developed countries a Luddite type of attitude can be shown towards technological advances. As in many other matters each administration will make its own decisions in the light of its own needs, resources and priorities: however the technology must never predominate over the information itself and the needs of clients.

8.3.3 In information science it is not necessarily a question of making workers redundant but rather that just as machines can now make calculations which could not be made by human beings so vast quantities and complexities of information can only be handled by automated processes. Before long the desire to have access to these could become universal and escalating costs of traditional manual systems and lack of alternatives to automated forms of data could make computer-based network sharing arrangements within a country and between countries unavoidable.

9. ACCOMMODATION

9.1.0 The special needs of all libraries for adequate storage space, reading facilities, working areas, air-conditioning and controlled temperatures for book preservation and security of property are too often neglected. Even in comparatively wealthy countries, insufficient or inadequate accommodation is provided for parliamentary libraries and in some places there is neglect of the provision of conditions necessary to preserve irreplaceable material.

9.1.1 Clients who make heavy demands on services can show selfish disregard for such considerations in subordinating the essential accommodation requirements of a library and its staff to their own demands for proximity and quick physical access.

9.1.2 Ideally the legislators should have access to a reading room which is close enough to the debating chamber or committee rooms to allow speedy access if necessary. The reading room should be essentially a quiet area with a mixture of furniture to provide for serious study and reading (desks) and more comfortable relaxation (lounges). Lighting should be adjusted according to both study and recreational areas and staff movement and noise should be kept to a minimum. Reference material should be located in a convenient central position and there should be easy access to newspapers, serials and audio-visual services. Use is made of language booths in some places and also facilities for individual listening to recorded music.

9.2 Buildings

9.2.1 A few developing countries already have, or soon will have, modern parliamentary buildings. As recently as June 1980 the government of Papua New Guinea announced that a contract had been let for such a new building. Australia has decided on the design of its new national parliament house which is scheduled for completion by January 1988. Other countries have to make the best they can of whatever space is available. This often means that the services have to be divided between buildings - a state

of affairs which already exists, e.g. in Washington, Westminster, Ottawa and elsewhere.

9.2.2 The accommodation needs of a parliamentary library depend on a number of variables including the number of clients to be served, the range of services offered, the size of the collection and the extent to which non-print material is used. No minimum standards for accommodation can be laid down but the extent to which adequate accommodation is provided for its information services indicates the importance attached to those services by a legislature. There is some useful literature on library accommodation.

9.2.3 One important feature which is often overlooked by those responsible for library accommodation in general and new buildings in particular is flexibility. The importance of the flexibility principle is stated by the Head of the School of Librarianship, Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology, Aberdeen, Scotland, J.M. Orr,[9] in the following passage:

> "Throughout the history of libraries the tendency has been for them to grow in size and to need more accommodation for storage purposes. In many instances there has been a growth in readership which has placed undue demands on a building which was constructed for fewer readers. With succeeding decades librarians have altered their ideas on the services which they offer, new services have been added, and routines and techniques have had to be altered to meet the changes. Often the inflexibility of a building construction has hampered proposed alterations. Every modern writer on the subject has urged that new buildings be designed for future flexibility".

10. POSTSCRIPT

10.1.0 There is a lamentable dearth of legislative libraries in transitional countries with inevitable deprivation to legislators and governments in access to information.

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9. ORR, J.M. "Designing Library Buildings for Activity", Andre Deutsch, London, 1972, p.13.

10.1.1 Professor Pauline Atherton, speaking about barriers to access to information says:

> "Managements and governments have often failed to appreciate the importance of information in the pattern of modern economic progress. It has been suggested that one reason for this is the managers and officials sometimes fear their own secrets will be lost in the process of gathering information. This may be caused by ignorance of what information services can do, and ignorance of the value of information to a particular organization. It may be because of traditionalism - what my father did is good enough for me, so what should we bother to change - coupled with a real fear of progress and forced change. Or it may be just a matter of laziness in facing up to the needs of the age".10

10.1.2 One of the earliest supporters of empirical methods in solving problems, the English philosopher and statesman Francis Bacon - (1561-1626) said in his "Religious Meditations" that "knowledge itself is power". The independence and national identity of many transitional nations might soon depend on that sort of power. There would be more concern for the provision of resources for legislative libraries and research services if politicians heeded the words of Francis Bacon. It is impossible for any rulers, governments, legislatures or parliaments to deal properly with the affairs of the people and country for which they are responsible unless they have access to up-to-date, reliable information.

10.1.3 Information can generate power which in its turn can be used to reach the goals of transitional societies and to contribute towards permanent peace between nations and the welfare of all mankind. Parliamentary libraries and research services have unique responsibilities in providing access to that information for the legislators they serve.

Canberra, Australia
July 1980

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10. ATHERTON, Pauline, op.cit., p.11.

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